

WATER POLICY INTERIM COMMITTEE January 6, 2020
Room 172, State Capitol Building
January 6th, 2020

Exhibit 4

My name is Jim Hagenbarth and I am representing the Big Hole Watershed Committee. My family has been using water from the Big Hole River and its tributaries in the Glen area since 1870. These uses included mining, recreation, irrigated pasture and cropland, and stockwater. Since the 1970's the recreational demand on the fishery in the Big Hole River escalated to where tension between irrigators and sportsmen in dry years became unbearable and vicious. In 1995 Governor Racicot offered a consensus based process to address the situation and over the next couple of years a few willing ranchers and sportsmen forged a collaborative plan built on trust and respect and the Big Hole Watershed Committee became a reality. Representing community based interests the Watershed Committee embraced conservation efforts which led to the delisting of the Artic Grayling, developed a drought plan, supported a recreation plan to address fishing pressure, pushed for equitable funding of gauging stations, and developed a 150 foot setback and a 100 year floodplain mapping that was supported by the four counties along the river. The Committee is currently managing riparian restoration activities on the Mt. Haggin Game range restoring riparian function caused by past placer mining and impacts of the smelter in Anaconda. The Committee is currently involved in collaborative efforts by agencies and other groups to address the negative impacts of timber encroachment on the watershed.

In May of 2016 the Big Hole and Beaverhead Watershed Committees sponsored a cloud seeding seminar to learn about this developing technology and its application in our watersheds. Both Senator Welborn and Representative Shaw attended this meeting and interest in this tool has been carried forward in Montana by Representative Shaw and myself to where we are today. With the current information available and its beneficial use in surrounding states over the last 20 years, the responsible application weather modification tools has been proven to be a safe and productive.

As the Big Hole Watershed Committee continues to identify issues and craft solutions that are beneficial to our landscape, we as a Committee support weather modification legislation that is based on safe and proven scientific methodology to enhance the available atmospheric precipitation that passes over our landscape. The site specific application of this technology could be used to increase the high mountain snowpack that enhances the ground and surface water that supports our watershed and that of the Upper Missouri.

Thank you,

Jim Hagenbarth
Vice Chairman of the Big Hole Watershed Committee